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WHAT IS THE C. C. C. ACCOMPLISHING?

Radio address by C. M. Granger, Forest Economist, U. S. Forest Service, in the National Farm and Home Hour, August 31, 1933.

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As you all know, more than three hundred thousand men have gone into the woods this summer under the President's Emergency Conservation Work program. It is the greatest mobilization of men for conservation work ever made in this country. To enroll these thousands of men, establish them in more than fourteen hundred camps, and organize their work along useful and constructive lines, all within a period of only three months, has been a gigantic undertaking, calling for the best efforts of several agencies of the Government.

Since our forest problem is a national one, respecting neither artificial boundaries nor land ownership, this work has been undertaken where it is needed, irrespective of State lines; on land in Federal and State ownership or on private land when necessary in the public interest, and provided, of course, that State and private owners cooperate.

Nearly half of the Civilian Conservation Corps camps have been established on our national forests. To the Forest Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture has been assigned the huge task of laying out the work projects for these camps, providing the necessary equipment and leadership, and directing the actual work. The Forest Service is also cooperating actively with State agencies in organizing and supervising the projects on State and private forest lands. It has been a big job, but we're glad to report that a large amount of constructive work has already been chalked up, and the rate of accomplishment is constantly increasing.

You will want to know what kind of work these men are doing. The work varies, of course, as between Maine and California, or Montana and Florida. It varies, too, with ownership of the land, and with the purposes for which the land and its resources are being administered.

Popular thought connects the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps with the planting of trees. True, tree planting will be done, but it will constitute only a small part of the program, because the forest tree nursery capacity cannot be expanded overnight. The main work-- is to help protect, develop, and perpetuate our existing forests.

Every year millions of acres of timber are damaged or totally destroyed by fires that sweep over them. To reduce this huge annual toll on our forest resources, it is essential that protection be extended. The Federal Forest Service, the National Park Service, the States, and some companies already maintain protective systems, but the area is vast, many of the fires occur in isolated regions difficult of access, and facilities for fighting the fires are often lacking.

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In our 160,000,000 acres of national forests, there are large areas untraversed even by trails, to say nothing of roads. If proper protection is to be given, roads and trails must be built, so that once a fire has been sighted, men can get there in a short time to prevent the flames from getting beyond control. Hundreds of miles of these protection roads and trails are needed.

The Government already maintains thousands of miles of telephone lines in the National Forests as an aid to fire protection. These must be extended to new look-out towers and to ranger stations which will be constructed at strategic points in the forest. Construction of fire lines, and hazard abatement are other lines of important work.

When actual fires break out in the forests, the C.C.C. men are subject to call for fire fighting. Already, in practically every important forest region, the men have had the opportunity to show their mettle as fire fighters, and with some exceptions, we've found that they go after the fires hard. Get-away time from the camps on fire calls has been reported as low as 30 seconds.

Out on the Sitgreaves National Forest in Arizona, the other day, the Hart Canyon camp was confronted by eight lightning fires at once. They got them all in short order. Probably you've read in the papers of the big fire that has been raging in Oregon. Here, and at other big fires that broke out in various parts of the west recently, the C.C.C. boys were right in the front line, and doing excellent work.

Another type of work is the improvement of public camp grounds, with benches, tables, and garbage pits, because in the past funds have been so scarce that it has been impossible to satisfy the demands of those who want public camps on the National Forests.

Disease control, too, is of prime importance. For example, there is blister rust, which preys on the white pine forests in New England, and the Lake States and Northwest regions, and threatens the basic resource on which hundreds of lumbering communities are dependent. Then there is insect control. Bark beetles destroy forest values running into millions of dollars. Another insect that preys particularly on the forests of the East is the gypsy moth. These must be eradicated.

As I said, there is work on State-owned forests under cooperative arrangements. Other work is being done on privately owned land where such work entails a public benefit, - such as fire protection, forest disease and insect control, and prevention and control of the type of soil erosion which aggravates flood conditions.

More than a hundred of the camps are engaged primarily in erosion control work. On areas where soil washing is severe, the boys are putting in check dams to stop the gullies from deepening, and planting and seeding in brush or trees or grass to help hold the soil in place and check the rapid run-off of silt-laden water after rains.

Another highly-important job is the thinning out of heavy stands of timber. Just as in a flower garden you cull out the weak and sickly plants, so old, diseased, and crooked trees must be taken out. Where stands of young trees are dense, some of the trees must be removed to give the others more room to grow.

Many of the boys came into the camps so green that they didn't know a shovel from an ax. It was encouraging to see how quickly they got the hang of the work, and how much pride they take in doing it well. They are learning the value of good tools, they are proud to graduate to the higher-class tools, and they take pride in keeping them in good shape. Some of the boys, they tell me, are even taking their tools to bed with them, rather than have some other boy swap a dull ax for a sharp one.

The work that the Civilian Conservation Corps will accomplish this year will by no means complete all that needs to be done for the improvement and protection of our forests. But it will be a long step ahead. It will render a great public service by helping to put our forests in a more productive condition. At the same time it gives these thousands of young men a chance to keep out of the bread lines, a chance to get a fresh start in life. It can't help but benefit the men, as well as the forests.

As one of our men puts it, the two go hand in hand. The men need the forests, and the forests need the men.

